

June 28, 1999

Clinton Flip-Flops, Now Endorsing Social Security Lockbox
Clinton's Cave on Lockbox
Leaves Senate Democrats Isolated

Today President Clinton found new principles in a fiscal windfall. Projecting a federal budget surplus far larger than when he released his official budget this year, President Clinton has now reversed his earlier decision to spend \$158 billion of the Social Security surplus on new government programs. Now the President says Social Security's money should be saved. This dramatic reversal ranks with Clinton's pledge as a candidate in 1992 to cut taxes, and instead as president in 1993 to raise them by a record \$240 billion.

"Social Security taxes should be saved for Social Security, period."

President Clinton, press conference, June 28, 1999

Clinton's latest flip-flop leaves Senate Democrats totally isolated in their opposition to a Social Security lockbox that would protect these surpluses. Senate Democrats have four times blocked Social Security lockbox legislation from coming before the Senate for a vote. House Democrats already have joined with their Republican colleagues in overwhelmingly supporting lockbox legislation. Now top-Democrat President Clinton has endorsed the concept of setting aside all of the Social Security surplus. Senate Democrats are thus isolated not only from Republicans — who all along have supported setting aside 100 percent of the Social Security surplus in their budget — but from the head as well as much of the body of their own party.

It was reasonable to wonder earlier whether Senate Democrats were trying to defend President Clinton's decision to spend \$158 billion of the Social Security surplus. However, with today's defection, it begs the question: Just what are Senate Democrats fighting for? Are Senate Democrats fighting to defend their own desire to dip into the Social Security surplus? Or, as their continued week-long filibuster of the Agriculture funding bill intimates, are they merely fighting for the sake of filibuster and gridlock itself?

While it takes a budget windfall for the President to find his principles, what will it take for Senate Democrats?

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